Fred Lowery

WHISTLE FOR SUCCESS!

Dorothy May Vincent

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Whistle for Success!

by Dorothy May Vincent

HE whistled his way from rags to riches. And in spite of being blind!

That's what makes Fred Lowery unique in the music world. That's why he's so anxious to tell other handicapped music lovers never to give up. To keep on plugging. Or playing. Or singing. Or, as in his case, just plain whistling.

Fred was born down in Palestine, Texas. Blinded when only a little more than a year old. Orphaned at two. Seven found him going to school at the Austin Institute for the Blind where, in addition to regular studies, he studied voice and violin. Someday, he dreamed, he would be the world's greatest violinist.

But fate had other plans, in the form of a mocking bird. It began whistling to Fred. Every day as Fred picked cotton boles to earn a bit of extra money, that same tantalizing bird would follow the boy about, whistling to him.

Fred whistled back. Over and over he whistled back, until pretty soon no one could tell whether it was the bird whistling or Fred. Then Fred took to adding fancy-work to his notes —cadenzas, double notes, trills of rare variety.

One day, when a professional whistler came to entertain the Blind School, he asked for volunteer performers. The students pushed Fred forward. And Fred whistled, putting in all the fireworks he could think of.

It was his lucky day. For the whistling artist told Fred all he needed to do to make himself into a concert artist was—practice . . . practice . . . practice.

Fred bought a Vic, added all the classical records he could afford, and spent six hours each day whistling with them. It paid, just as the visiting artist had told him; first in a radio job in Dallas, engagements for parties, theatres, anywhere and everywhere he could earn a penny.

After graduation, he set out for New York. The Big City almost threw the young blind Texan for a loop. Radio spots were full. Night clubs said patrons didn't want to watch a blind man whistle while they ate.

OK, said Fred. If his blindness stood in the way of his success, he would overcome the blindness. He would learn to get about so none would suspect his handicap. He learned every street, every corner, every building. He became so adept at finding his way about that when he searched the radio stations again for jobs, few suspected his blindness.

Finally on Rudy Vallee's program he earned $120. To Fred that was fortune at last . Half of it went to pay his over-due bills. The other half he hid carefully in his room. It was stolen. Fred found himself down to his last traveler's check—a small one at that.

But, like the little bird in the cotton field, it was that little scrap of paper that turned Fred's luck. Asked to endorse it, he was so worried about his money troubles that he wrote "Loowery" instead of Lowery. With-

OFF-BEAT

BY E.W. McAd

out more ado, he was turned over to the credit manager as suspicious. So well had he learned to cover up his blindness that the cashier had failed to notice it. It took the credit manager to discover the handicap.

Eager to help, the manager introduced Fred to the right people—a wealthy socialite, Clara Belle Walsh, who in turn introduced him to singer John Charles Thomas, then Vincent Lopez, and still later Horace Heidt.

Fred was on his way. And what a way! As a feature on the Heidt show he whistled his way from coast to coast. Fritz Kreisler honored him with a special arrangement for whistling. His recording of "Indian Love Call" sold over 1,000,000 copies.

Fred is frequently described as being the only man in the world who can whistle two distinct notes at the same time, in harmony with each other, capable of raising either or both tones to produce the unique harmonic effects he achieves. When asked how he does achieve such unusual effects, Fred explains that he does not pucker when he whistles, believing that puckering minimizes the wind content of the mouth, creating a narrow rush of air and a harsh tone, and that, therefore, the lips should be held relaxed, normally yet firmly, when whistling. However he does it, though, is the result of intense practice, plus plenty of determination, which Fred considers to be the only way to achieve one's goal, whether it be in music, in any other line of work, or in overcoming a handicap.

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VINCENT M. DOROTHY

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